

RHETORIC vs. REALITY: Bush's Latest Speech to Congress

Fuzzy Facts in George W. Bush's 2003 State of the Union

Priority	Bush Rhetoric	Actual Action
Economy	"To bring our economy out of recession, we delivered the largest tax relief in a generation."	According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the economy began hemorrhaging jobs almost immediately after the passage of the first Bush tax cut. Specifically, the data shows that <u>in just the six months between the time the tax cut passed and September 11th, the economy shed an astounding 495,000 jobs - meaning the crisis began just as the tax cut was signed, and far before the terrorist attacks.</u>
Education	"To lift the standards of our public schools, we achieved historic education reform -- which must now be carried out in every school and in every classroom, so that every child in America can read and learn and succeed in life."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The President's first education budget after he signed and touted the education bill proposed \$22.2 billion for the No Child Left Behind Act - a <u>cut of \$90 million below prior year funding, and more than \$7 billion less than authorized:</u>▪ Title I: <u>Bush proposed only 18% of the increase promised in his own education bill</u>▪ Special Education: Bush proposed slowing the 3-year prior growth rate, leading to a <u>delay in reaching full funding by at least four years</u>▪ After School Centers: Bush proposed a funding freeze - a real cut after inflation, resulting in <u>50,000 fewer children</u> being served despite the tremendous demand from working parents for after school programs▪ English Language Training: Bush proposed a funding freeze - a <u>real cut</u> after inflation and an increase of an estimated 300,000 students with English assistance needs next year▪ Homeless Children: Bush proposed a funding freeze - a real cut after inflation, resulting in about <u>8,000 fewer homeless children being served</u>▪ Teacher Training: Bush proposed to cut teacher quality programs by \$163 million, resulting in <u>16,000 fewer teachers receiving quality training</u> than the year before, and <u>92,000 fewer teachers than could be trained</u> under the education bill▪ School Libraries: Bush proposed <u>95% less than the amount promised</u> in the education law, resulting in about <u>2.4 million fewer children benefiting</u> from the purchase of new library books than envisioned in the No Child Left Behind Act
Corporate Responsibility	"To insist on integrity in American business we passed tough reforms, and we are holding corporate criminals to account."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The President's FY2003 budget proposed just \$467 million - <u>40% less than authorized.</u> Bush increased this proposal after he signed the corporate reform bill – but only to \$567 million – still <u>26% less than full funding.</u>▪ Just months after signing the corporate reform bill, Bush's SEC staff "<u>softened proposed rules that would impose new obligations on lawyers and accountants.</u>" [NY Times, 1/22/03]

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Economic Stimulus	<p>“The tax relief is for everyone who pays income taxes -- and it will help our economy immediately: 92 million Americans will keep, this year, an average of almost \$1,000 more of their own money. A family of four with an income of \$40,000 would see their federal income taxes fall from \$1,178 to \$45 per year. (Applause.) Our plan will improve the bottom line for more than 23 million small businesses.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the non-partisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Bush’s use of averages are “misleading because the average is skewed upward by the very large tax cuts that would go to a small number of high-income taxpayers. For an example of how averages can be deceptive, consider a group of five individuals — four of whom each receive \$100 tax cuts and one who receives a \$4,600 tax cut. The average tax cut for the group is \$1,000, but four of the five receive far less than this amount.” In practice, <u>“almost a third of America’s couples and singles would receive absolutely no tax cut from President Bush’s stimulus proposal.”</u> Specifically, “three-fifths of Bush’s proposed tax reductions for this year would go to the best-off 10 percent of all taxpayers” [Source: CTJ]. In practice, that means <u>a person making more than \$378,000 would get an average tax cut of more than \$30,000 while a person making about \$36,000 would receive about \$289.</u>
Health care	<p>“Our second goal is high quality, affordable health care for all Americans. The American system of medicine is a model of skill and innovation, with a pace of discovery that is adding good years to our lives. Yet for many people, medical care costs too much -- and many have no coverage at all...we must work toward a system in which all Americans have a good insurance policy, choose their own doctors, and seniors and low-income Americans receive the help they need.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bush’s latest budget, which is still being negotiated by Congress, proposes to <u>slash \$740 million (12%) from HHS’s Health Resources and Services Administration</u> – one of the federal government’s most important agencies in providing health care to the uninsured and underinsured. Among other things, <u>Bush proposes to eliminate</u> the Community Access Program, grants to states to improve health care for the uninsured, and grants to insure health screening for all newborn infants. Furthermore, Bush’s budget would slash 75% out of funds for health professional training, and 30% out of grants to children’s hospitals throughout the nation.
“Compassionate Conservatism”	<p>“Our fourth goal is to apply the compassion of America to the deepest problems of America. For so many in our country -- the homeless and the fatherless, the addicted -- the need is great. Yet there's power, wonder-working power, in the goodness and idealism and faith of the American people. Americans are doing the work of compassion every day -- visiting prisoners, providing shelter for battered women, bringing companionship to lonely seniors. These good works deserve our praise; they deserve our personal support; and when appropriate, they deserve the assistance of the federal government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bush budget has repeatedly attempted to gut the very “safety-net” programs he touts with this kind of flowery language. Specifically, his budget would eliminate various low-income housing programs, <u>cut off 33,000 children</u> from child care, <u>slash 438,000 families</u> from heating assistance, <u>cut 36,000 seniors off of meals on wheels/congregate meals</u>, and <u>eliminate 50,000 children from participating in after school programs</u>. Additionally, just recently, Bush repealed the law that “lets states provide unemployment pay to workers who take unpaid time off to care for a newborn child.”
Afghanistan	<p>“We will continue helping [Afghanistan] secure their country, rebuild their society, and educate all their children -- boys and girls.”</p> <p>– Bush, State of the Union [1/29/02]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In August of 2002, <u>Bush effectively vetoed \$135 million</u> for aid to Afghanistan included in a bipartisan spending package. That money was slated to be spent on Afghan health, education, infrastructure and refugee assistance. Currently, the State Department reports that only roughly \$104 million has been spent to rebuild the war-torn nation.

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AIDS	<p>“Because the AIDS diagnosis is considered a death sentence, many do not seek treatment. Almost all who do are turned away. A doctor in rural South Africa describes his frustration. He says, "We have no medicines. Many hospitals tell people, you've got AIDS, we can't help you. Go home and die." In an age of miraculous medicines, no person should have to hear those words. (Applause.) AIDS can be prevented. Anti-retroviral drugs can extend life for many years. And the cost of those drugs has dropped from \$12,000 a year to under \$300 a year -- which places a tremendous possibility within our grasp. Ladies and gentlemen, seldom has history offered a greater opportunity to do so much for so many.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just months after Republican Senators Bill Frist (R-TN) and Jesse Helms (R-NC) offered legislation to give \$500 million to the Global AIDS fund, the GOP reneged on this promise and passed a supplemental appropriations bill that included just \$200 million. <u>Bush then effectively vetoed all \$200 million in August of 2002</u> when he refused to release the money. Because of this decision, no money has gone to the Global AIDS fund this year.
Homeland Security: General	<p>“This government is taking unprecedented measures to protect our people and defend our homeland.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the report by Senators Gary Hart (D-CO) and Warren Rudman (R-NH), <u>"America remains dangerously unprepared to prevent and respond to a catastrophic terrorist attack on U. S. soil."</u> As they said in their report to Congress, “if a catastrophic terrorist attack occurred today, emergency first responders - police, firefighters, and emergency personnel - in most of the nation's cities and counties are no better prepared to react now than they were prior to September 11.” Even more troubling, former Republican governor Jim Gilmore said, <u>“The threats we face are not diminishing...The current reorganization in the Federal executive branch will not be a panacea in countering the threat posed by terrorists.”</u>
Homeland Security: Reorganization	<p>“To protect our country, we reorganized our government and created the Department of Homeland Security, which is mobilizing against the threats of a new era.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President Bush has repeatedly voted down or rejected much-needed increases in homeland security funding that his own agencies and Cabinet secretaries say is desperately needed. As former Republican governor Jim Gilmore said while chairman of the U.S. Government’s task force on terrorism, <u>“The threats we face are not diminishing...The current reorganization in the Federal executive branch will not be a panacea in countering the threat posed by terrorists.”</u> [12/15/02]
Port Security	<p>“We've intensified security at the borders...”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Coast Guard reports that the first year cost of port security is at least \$963 million and that total costs over the next decade are \$4.4 billion. Despite this, Bush and the GOP leadership have passed only \$250 million for port security, repeatedly rejecting Democratic amendments to substantially increase this funding. Even more shocking, of the \$250 million appropriated, <u>just \$93 million has gone out the door.</u> For the FY 2003 budget, the House GOP bill includes just \$150 million for port security, while the GOP Senate bill includes just \$130 million – well below what is necessary.

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Border Security	<p>“We've intensified security at...ports of entry.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While Bush did hold a photo-op to sign legislation promising more INS/Border Patrol staff and facilities, <u>his budget provided no additional money</u> for this. Additionally, in August, Bush <u>vetoed</u> \$6.25M for promised pay upgrades for Border Patrol agents.
Intelligence	<p>“Since September the 11th, our intelligence and law enforcement agencies have worked more closely than ever to track and disrupt the terrorists. The FBI is improving its ability to analyze intelligence.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediately after September 11th, <u>Bush requested 66% less than what the FBI said it needed</u> (\$1.5 billion) for infrastructural, technology, intelligence analysis and information-sharing improvements. When Democrats attempted to add roughly \$600 million to the President's meager request, they were <u>voted down</u>, and the final bill ended up still being 25% less than what FBI needed (\$1.1 billion) In the August supplemental bill, Bush asked for just \$10 million for FBI. <u>Bush then vetoed the additional \$165 million</u> that Congress passed as part of a \$5.1 billion bipartisan homeland security package..
Veterans and the Military	<p>“Tonight I have a message for the men and women who will keep the peace, members of the American Armed Forces... You believe in America, and America believes in you.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than two weeks ago, the Bush Administration announced that it is <u>immediately cutting off access to its health care system thousands of veterans</u>, “a move the agency estimated will affect about <u>164,000 veterans</u> who were expected to enroll in the system during the current fiscal year” [Washington Post, 1/17/03] According to Veterans groups, <u>the Bush “VA medical care budget fell \$1.5 billion short”</u> of what is necessary [Joint Veterans letter to Bush, 1/7/02] with “the VA ending 2002 facing a serious funding deficit.” In 2002, Bush actually <u>vetoed \$275 million for veterans medical care</u> that was part of a bipartisan supplemental spending bill. The Vietnam Veterans of America, who characterized Bush's veto as an “ill-advised decision” said that “this move to diminish resources for the VA healthcare system further weakens the nation's preparedness to care for veterans wounded in previous conflicts” [8/16/2002]. All of this has meant “veterans are currently facing inordinate and unacceptable waiting times for basic healthcare services. Over 286,000 are currently waiting six months or longer for initial and follow-up medical appointments.”